

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 3967

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: AZORES REVOLT SOON?

SUMMARY: ON TWO OCCASIONS IN THE LAST WEEK, INDIVIDUALS ASSOCIATED WITH THE AZORES INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT HAVE SOUGHT OUT THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR TO (A) EMPHASIZE THAT THE INDEPENDENCE IS INEVITABLE AND WILL COME IN A MATTER OF WEEKS AND (B) ASKING WHAT POSITION OF USG WOULD BE IN EVENT OF REVOLT. END SUMMARY

1. JOAO MOTA AMARAL, PPD LEADER AND DEPUTY FROM THE AZORES, ASKED FOR MEETING WITH POLCOUNS ON JULY 10. AT LUNCH WITH POLCOUNS AND PONTA DELGADA PRINCIPAL OFFICER PFEIFLE, AMARAL POINTED OUT THAT A REVOLT HAD BECOME INEVITABLE IN THE AZORES. HE SAID THAT SENTIMENT IN ISLANDS WAS OVERWHELMING FOR SEPARATION FROM PORTUGAL. HE CITED AS EVIDENCE THE RECENT OPEN VOTES AT PPD MEETINGS ON TERCEIRA CALLING FOR INDEPENDENCE. HE SAID THAT THE STRUCTURE FOR A REVOLT WAS IN PLACE. RECENTLY THE AFM SERGEANTS ON THE ISLANDS HAD GONE TO LISBON TO ARGUE THE CAUSE OF THE AZORES AT THE ARMY AFM ASSEMBLY. THE SERGEANTS ARE SOLIDLY FOR INDEPENDENCE AND CONTROL THE TROOPS, WHO ARE ALL AZOREANS. ARMY ON ISLAND HAS ASKED FOR SURFACE TO SHIP MISSILES, OSTENSIBLY TO DEFEND ISLANDS AGAINST AN ATTACK BY SPINOLISTAS. POLCOUNS EXPRESSED SCEPTICISM THAT GOP WOULD BE
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TAKEN IN BY THIS TRANSPARENT EXCUSE BUT AMARAL SAID THAT

ROCKETS HAD BEEN PROMISED FOR DELIVERY WITHIN A MATTER OF WEEKS.

2. JORGE SOARES MOTA, BROTHER OF THE EDITOR OF "ACORES" IN SAO MIGUEL, SEDES MEMBER, AND AN EMPLOYEE OF MOBIL OIL IN LISBON, SOUGHT OUT POLCOUNS AT HOME ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON JULY 13 TO MAKE POINT THAT FLA WOULD MOUNT AN INDEPENDENCE EFFORT IN AUGUST OR SOONER AND TO INQUIRE WHAT US POSITION WOULD BE. IN PARTICULAR HE WANTED TO KNOW IF US PERSONNEL ON TERCEIRA WOULD INTERFERE WITH EFFORTS TO BLOCK THE RUN-WAY AT LAJES DURING A REVOLT.

3. MOTA SAID THAT FLA WOULD COME OUT WITH A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES ON JULY 14. HE SAID THAT FLA WAS TRYING TO AVOID INVOLVEMENT WITH INDEPENDENCE SUPPORTERS WHO HAVE CONNECTIONS WITH THE OLD REGIME. AT THE SAME TIME THEY WISH TO KEEP THE MOVEMENT UNIFIED AND NOT CREATE RIVAL ORGANIZATIONS. THEY HAVE REJECTED SUPPORT FROM RIGHT WING GROUPS IN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN THAT WISH TO USE THE AZORES AS A BASE TO OVERTHROW THE GOP. JOSE ALMEIDA'S CONNECTIONS WITH THE OLD REGIME ARE A SOURCE OF EMBARRASSMENT BUT THEY ARE UNSURE OF HOW TO REPLACE HIM AS A SPOKESMAN IN THE US WITHOUT DIVIDING MOVEMENT. THEIR CONTACT MAN WITH THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT ALSO HAS OLD REGIME CONNECTIONS BUT THEY ARE RELUCTANT TO GET RID OF HIM BECAUSE OF HIS CLOSE LINKS TO THE FRENCH.

4. MOTA, WHO COMMANDED ARMY COMPANY COMPOSED OF AZOREANS WHILE SERVING IN ANGOLA, SAYS THAT THE MILITARY END OF FLA IS BEING COMPETENTLY ORGANIZED BY AN EX-ARMY OFFICER WHO IS UTILIZING THE MANY ISLANDERS WITH PORTUGUESE ARMY EXPERIENCE. HE SAID FLA HAS ONLY LIGHT INFANTRY WEAPONS AND A FEW BAZOOKAS AND MORTARS. THEY HAVE NOT CONSIDERED CAREFULLY WHAT THEY WILL DO IF GOP RESPONDS WITH AN AMPHIBIOUS OR PARATROOP ATTACK. THE SEPARATISTS ARE QUITE CONFIDENT THAT THE AFM HAS WRITTEN OFF THE ISLANDS AND THAT PORTUGUESE ARMY BELIEVES IT CAN DO NOTHING ABOUT A REVOLT. MOTA FEELS THAT MAINLAND TROOPS WILL REFUSE TO GO TO AZORES OR THAT, ONCE THEY GET TO THE AZORES, WILL NOT FIGHT.

5. MOTA IS WORRIED ABOUT SUPPLIES OF POL AND CEREALS
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FOLLOWING A REVOLT. HE SAYS THAT THE ISLANDS HAVE A THREE MONTH STOCK OF POL AND A GOOD BIT MORE BUNKER FUEL ON HAND, BUT BELIEVES SUPPORT FROM THE WEST WILL BE NECESSARY WHEN THE AZORES' TRADITIONAL PORTUGUESE SUPPLY SOURCES AND MARKETS ARE CUT OFF.

6. MOTA EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT USG WOULD KEEP CONSULAR PERSONNEL ON PONTA DELGADA AFTER REVOLT, AS THIS WOULD BE

STRONG MORALE BOOSTER FOR INDEPENDENCE SUPPORTERS.

7. COMMENT: ALMOST CASUAL ACCEPTANCE OF INEVITABILITY OF REVOLT BY AZORES ON PART OF BOTH INDEPENDENCE SUPPORTERS AND MANY KNOWLEDGEABLE MAINLAND PORTUGUESE SUGGESTS TO US THAT AN INDEPENDENCE ATTEMPT MAY INDEED BE MADE SOON DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE PARTICULARLY WELL PREPARED TO HANDLE THE POLITICAL, MILITARY, AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF A REVOLT.

8. THERE IS MUCH SPECULATION AS TO WHAT EFFECTS AN UPRISING IN THE AZORES WOULD HAVE ON MAINLAND PORTUGAL. SOME BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD TRIGGER A REVOLT BY NORTHERN PORTUGAL; OTHERS ARE CONVINCED IT WOULD RESULT IN ANOTHER STRONG LURCH TO THE LEFT AND A TOUGH CRACKDOWN ON DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS IN PORTUGAL. SOME FORESEE A COMBINATION OF BOTH THESE OUTCOMES. A THIRD POSSIBILITY, WHICH BECOMES MORE PLAUSIBLE EVERY DAY THAT GOP DOES NOTHING IS THAT GOP EITHER HAS DECIDED IT CANNOT HANDLE REVOLT OR WOULD CONTINUE TO BE TOTALLY PREOCCUPIED WITH ITS OWN PROBLEMS AND ANGOLA. IN THIS CASE, REACTION HERE WOULD BE LIMITED TO STRONG VERBAL ATTACKS, DEMONSTRATIONS, AND DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY -- MUCH OF WHICH WOULD BE DIRECTED AGAINST USG. IN ANY CASE, THERE APPEARS TO BE STRONG RESISTANCE ON THE PART OF THE INDEPENDENCE SUPPORTERS TO WHOM WE HAVE TALKED TO THE AZORES BEING USED AS A BASE FOR COUNTERREVOLUTION IN PORTUGAL.

9. POLCOUNS REPLIED TO SPECIFIC QUERIES FROM MOTA AMARAL AND SOARES MOTA BY REITERATING US POSITION OF NEUTRALITY IN REGARD TO ANY INDEPENDENCE EFFORTS.
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